Psychotherapy and Sexuality: A New Era?

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Topics

- Psychological literature and same-sex sexuality
- Therapeutic practice with lesbian and gay clients
- Implications for lesbian and gay well-being
Historical Context
Mental Health Implications
‘Homosexuality in and of itself is unrelated to psychological disturbance or maladjustment. Homosexuals as a group are not more psychologically disturbed on account of their homosexuality’

Lesbian and Gay Affirmative Therapy
An equally positive human experience and expression to heterosexual identity

(Davies, 1996: 25)
Issues in Psychotherapy with Lesbians and Gay Men:
A Survey of British Psychologists
Poor Practice
Exemplary Practice
Therapeutic Models - Affirmative Potential?
*Ignore environmental influences

*Individualise and blame the stress on the individual
Prescriptive in terms of ideas about family.
Anti-discrimination value embedded in its core philosophy
*Fulfilling human potential
*Active listening
Purpose of the therapist is to enter into the phenomenological world of the client.
* Value neutral, pragmatic rather than dogmatic stance
* Limited focus on early developmental processes
Circumstances of your external world and the circumstances of your internal world are not separate, discrete entities.
Personal Qualities of the Therapist
Centrality of the Therapeutic Relationship
Knowing
Lesbian and Gay Experiences
Sexual Identity of the Therapist
“You must know what I am talking about here” and I have ... said “I kinda know what you are talking about from my own experience but I am not sure it’s exactly the same and I guess some of the questions that I am wondering about in relation to what you’re raising are something about the difference between your experience and my experience.’
Safety in Therapy
‘I admitted for the very first time to any strangers my sexual orientation ... I must say it was very positive
Can Heterosexual Therapists Practice Affirmatively?
Help with relationship with the world ‘out there’
‘As a therapist you are in a powerful position and you can be a lesbian, which is a not good thing [in the eyes of society and perhaps in the eyes of the client too] - possibly [by being an ‘out’ lesbian therapist there’s a way to make it a slightly gooder thing]’
* Explore own sexuality
* Explore the contra-sexual identity: Gay therapist explore their heterosexuality; Heterosexual therapist identify and explore same sex attraction
Rising to the Challenge: The Way Forward?
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